

Polity Exam

The *Book of Order* states: "This examination shall assess the candidate's working knowledge of the constitutional structure of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the method by which differences are properly resolved and programs to fulfill the mission of the church are determined" [G-14.0310d (5)].

General Musings

This test asks that you identify constitutional and interpersonal issues of church polity according to the *Book of Order* and to relate this knowledge to given situations. The *Book of Order* includes the "Form of Government," the "Directory for Worship," and the "Rules of Discipline."

- You will be given a situation and the comments of one or more people. If you cannot ascertain how the person feels, then in your answer you might want to examine several ways you might respond (e.g. "If Mary were just curious, I would respond xxxxx. But if Mary were seriously disturbed, I would xxxxx.")
- Demonstrate that you not only know the letter of the law, but the spirit of the law. After you give the exact rule, explain its meaning and relevance to the situation in your own words. This does not need and should not be a lengthy explanation. One or two sentences should be sufficient.
- It is also helpful to give theological reasons for our rules. You might say something like, "The rule says this because Jesus instructed us to . . ."
- State the rule specifically if you can. If you can't find the rule then at least say something like "In chapter three of . . ." It is important to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding by referring to specific passages or areas.
- In dealing with conflict situations always try to reconcile first. Use the judicial process last. Don't ever begin a counseling session with the Book of Order.
- The "Golden Rules for the Church Polity Examination" by the Polity Task Group is an excellent resource for study. It is attached at the end of this guide.
- Your answers on this exam will likely to be the shortest of all the exams. That's fine. Just be sure to answer the question.

